



● **Establish a local service-learning advisory committee or include service-learning representatives on existing school and district advisory committees.**

A SUCCESSFUL SERVICE-LEARNING INITIATIVE must include educators, community members, students, and parents as equal partners. Appointing a subcommittee of school/community representatives who know service-learning to an existing school advisory group or establishing a local Service-Learning Advisory Committee can ensure that service-learning activities are successful. Including students on this committee ensures that youth voices are prominent in all aspects of service-learning.

**Select Advisory Committee Members**

A service-learning advisory committee or subcommittee should be established. If the representatives

for service-learning are added to an existing committee, the persons must include:

- School administrators and teachers who are implementing service-learning
- Students who are participating in courses that use service-learning
- Family members of students involved in service-learning
- Representatives of the community-based organizations or agencies involved with the service-learning activities
- Representatives from higher education institutions if they are partners
- Community members

- Members of the classified and certificated bargaining units who may work alongside the students on projects (It is beneficial to include these persons to assure them that students' service activities at schools will not deprive employees of their jobs. With such assurances, the employees usually enjoy working alongside the students to complete much-needed campus projects.)

## Define the Community

One of the service-learning advisory committee's first tasks must be to define the community that will be involved. This community could be one or several schools, a school district, a neighborhood, or the entire community. Initially, some educators may want to limit service-learning activities to their own school to resolve time constraints or to avoid liability issues. Eventually, however, the community must be defined more broadly to allow for ever-increasing service opportunities that fulfill real needs.

## Develop an Understanding of the Differences Between Schools and Community Agencies

Because schools operate in a world different from that of community agencies, building relationships is essential. Community-based agencies and organizations have a wealth of resources to share with schools; however, persons from either schools or agencies may feel intimidated or frustrated with one another because of a lack of familiarity. A broad-based, school-community advisory group can overcome many of the differences between these worlds. Perceived obstacles can be addressed, and the partnership can grow on the basis of mutual respect.

## Trout Creek Service-Learning Advisory Board

Lake Tahoe Unified School District

The Trout Creek Service-Learning Advisory Board at the Lake Tahoe Unified School District consists of one member from each of the partnership agencies—U.S. Forest Service; California Water Quality Control Board, Lahontan District; Tahoe Resource Conservation District; Natural Resources Conservation Service; U.S. Geologic Survey; and South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce. These Advisory Board members meet monthly or bimonthly, as needed, with the representatives of the school district on the Board—a district administrator, the sixth grade teachers, the service-learning coordinator, two sixth grade students, a third grade teacher, and two high school teachers.

During the meetings the board discusses upcoming project needs, ways to connect the service activities to the curriculum, pretest and post-test measures to determine student learning through the projects, teaching methods that work and those that need improvement, and evaluation of completed curriculum units and related service activities

The board also pursues training opportunities to ensure a strong knowledge base and long-term sustainability. Community partners always encourage the school representatives to make suggestions for new projects and to identify needed resources. As the program expands, each new service activity is shaped to become an intricate part of the curriculum on the basis of the ideas, suggestions, and expertise of the board.

Trout Creek Service-Learning Project  
CalServe Grant Application, 1997

## Develop a Local Vision for Service-Learning

The advisory committee must develop a vision of service-learning that articulates its benefits to all

stakeholders and reflects the community's composition and needs. This vision must be shared by the school and the community to minimize the possibility of the school developing projects that do not respond to identified community needs.

Youth will one day be called on to take public action on issues that concern them locally, nationally, and globally (Goodlad 1984). Service-learning provides a model approach to bring together youth, community representatives, and school personnel around the local vision. Including students in this process also allows them to see the differences among the public, private, and nonprofit employment sectors; and it encourages the community partners to focus on youth development.

### **Develop a Public Relations Plan for Service-Learning**

Communities must be educated about service-learning as a powerful instructional strategy and an integrated part of the curriculum. The advisory committee should develop a public relations plan to make the community aware of the benefits of service-learning. Parents, school board members, and the public should be invited to participate in service activities in which students are engaged to

see firsthand the learning and service that are occurring in the community. Every opportunity must be made, through newspaper articles, local television coverage, and reports to community agencies and local funders, to highlight the service that students provide.

### **Identify a "Point Person"**

The balance between community and school cultures can be difficult to achieve and maintain because they are so different. The advisory committee must work with the "point person" designated to facilitate the day-to-day process of linking schools and the community. This person, who may also coordinate and promote service-learning within a school or district, must be knowledgeable about the workings of the community and its agencies and about service-learning.

### **Recognize Accomplishments**

The advisory committee should recognize all participants for their accomplishments. "Students, teachers, administrators, community representatives, and others involved in service-learning deserve recognition for their efforts. Establishing a system of recognition creates a climate of respect

## **"Make a Difference" Awards Ceremony**

Every spring the Volunteer Center of Inland Empire and the Inland Center Mall in San Bernardino honor teenagers from the city's high schools who have made significant contributions to their community through service. During the mall's "Make a Difference" awards program, students receive "service letters," just as athletes receive varsity letters for outstanding contributions to sports teams. Meant to be sewn onto a sweater or jacket, the big "S" features two hands clasped together in a symbol of support. This annual recognition ceremony has raised community interest and caused other schools in the area to learn about involving students in service-learning.

*Volunteer Centers of California, fall 1994*



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and value for service-learning, motivates participants to continue their work, and attracts new partners” (Follman, Watkins, and Wilkes 1994, 75).

### **Further Reading Related to This Recommendation**

Cairn, R., and J. Kielsmeier, eds. 1991. *Growing Hope: A Sourcebook on Integrating Youth Service into the School Curriculum*. Roseville, Minn.: National Youth Leadership Council.

California Department of Education. 1997. *Service-Learning Challenge Toolkit*. Sacramento: California Department of Education.

Follman, J.; J. Watkins; and D. Wilkes. 1994. *Learning by Serving: 2000 Ideas for Service-Learning Projects*. Greensboro, N.C.: SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE).

Goodlad, J. L. 1984. *A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future*. San Francisco: McGraw-Hill Book Co.

Kingsley, C., and L. Laplantee, eds. 1994. *Things That Work in Community Service-Learning*. Springfield, Mass.: The Community Service-Learning Center.

McSpadden, J. 1996. “Forming Effective Community Advisory Boards.” In *Critical Issues in K–12 Service-Learning: Case Studies and Reflections*. Edited by Gita-Gulati Partee and William R. Finger. Raleigh, N.C.: National Society for Experiential Education.

Wade, R. 1997. *Community Service-Learning: A Guide to Including Service in the Public School Curriculum*. Albany: State University of New York Press.